

AMERICORPS/AMERICORPS VISTA

## INCLUSION OBJECTIVE

**Everybody can be great  
because anybody can serve.**

***Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.***

# PRESENTERS

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# CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

- Senior Corps: a network of programs that helps Americans age 55 and older use their skills and experience in service opportunities that address the needs of their communities. Senior Corps includes RSVP, The Foster Grandparent Program, and the Senior Companion Program.
- AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps/VISTA: members serve with local and national organizations to meet community needs while earning education awards to help finance college or training. And
- Learn and Serve America: links community service and learning objectives for youth from kindergarten through college as well as youth in community-based organizations.

# Handbook for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities in National and Community Service Programs

UCP ***Access AmeriCorps*** disability inclusion  
training and technical assistance project.

An inclusive service environment welcomes all people, regardless of their disability. It recognizes and uses their skills and strengthens their abilities. An inclusive service environment is respectful, supportive, and equalizing. An inclusive service environment reaches out to and includes individuals with disabilities at all levels — from first time participants to board members.

**AmeriCorps projects welcome members who may have disabilities**

***“Qualified individuals with disabilities and those from diverse backgrounds are strongly encouraged to apply. We provide reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals and conduct all activities in fully accessible settings.”***

# **AmeriCorps positions can fit the schedules of people with disabilities**

Positions are term limited and members work for specified periods of time, i.e. 1700 hrs, 900 hrs, 450 hrs. Terms can be what's best for the person.

# **AmeriCorps has new positions open every year**

**Positions immediately available in Arizona!**  
**Serve your country in your community.**  
**AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps\*VISTA:**  
**A pathway to training  
and future employment.**



# **Accommodations are comprehensive**

Accommodations can be provided in helping with the application process, in the way work is done and in getting other benefits of national service, e.g., training, staff gatherings, leadership opportunities.

# **AmeriCorps members get tangible benefits**

Benefits include:

- a living allowance,
- help with college costs and student loans,
- access to health insurance,
- child care, etc.

# **AmeriCorps members get supportive supervision**

AmeriCorps staff understand the  
meaning of people-first.

# Ted's Story

## The Beginning

Ted's Story story begins with the suggestion to him by a Division of Developmental Disabilities Support Coordinator that he apply to be an AmeriCorps member with Youth in Action AmeriCorps. The Support Coordinator had received a document entitled, "Positions Immediately Available in Arizona! Serve Your Country and Your Community" that has been distributed through the Arizona National and Community Service Inclusion Team.

# Ted's Story

## Ted's Assignment

Ted decided to apply for a quarter time membership slot. The process to finalize and place Ted took three months. Although this process took more time than we might have expected, we learned a lot about the disability services network in our community. We identified a site where Ted would be able to do the disability awareness work that is his first priority for service, and his AmeriCorps orientation was in early June. But a better way to start the story is to share a small part of the essay that Ted submitted as part of his AmeriCorps application:

## Ted's Story

# “Why I Want to be an AmeriCorps Member”

We are living in extremely difficult times in our nation today. Each and every day I see many Americans, especially those with disabilities being left behind. For nine years I have worked at Hozhoni Foundation, a non-profit foundation that serves people with developmental disabilities. My co-workers have been my greatest teachers. Many feel disconnected from mainstream America.

# Why I Want to be an AmeriCorps Member (con't)

My family discouraged me from applying [to AmeriCorps] because they feared that I would be assigned out-of-state, and had too many needs of my own. In the meantime I became involved as a disability advocate. It has been a joyous journey, and has afforded me many fabulous experiences. [Now] I hope to become an AmeriCorps volunteer and to make a difference in Flagstaff and beyond. By getting out in the world, I hope to break down barriers and change attitudes about disability. I believe all of our lives will be changed for the better.

# Ted's Story

## Ted's Team

Mobilizing Ted's Team is also a critical component to his service story. Ted's Team now includes: Ted, his family and personal caregivers, the Division of Developmental Disabilities, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, his Division of Developmental Disabilities Support Coordinator, his service/support providers from the Hozhoni Foundation, the Institute for Human Development, the Institute for Future Workforce Development and Youth in Action AmeriCorps. Ted's Team has been enthusiastic in its support of Ted's desire to serve his community through AmeriCorps.



# Ted's Story

## Ted at Work

On June 12, 2007 I officially began my AmeriCorps service. There are two words that come to mind in these first 100 hours. It takes a team and it feels like I was extremely busy it was hard to believe that honor now the first hundred hours has come and gone I had a full plate particularly in the very beginning through use an action has been incredibly patient. The reason I say it takes a team simply because for me to successfully complete 4500 hours of AmeriCorps service goes both ways not only do I as an AmeriCorps member get the full benefits of AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps kids to learn from me being involved in four from projects in a span of three hours a day three days a week is truly amazing.

# Ted's Story

## Ted's Message

All it takes is the will to modify the task not the person who knows what exciting story I will have the next hundred hours for part three

# PEOPLE FIRST

1. **Speak Directly**
2. **Offer to shake hands**
3. **Identify yourself and others, identify who you are talking to**
4. **Offer assistance, but wait**
5. **Treat adults as adults**
6. **Don't lean on wheelchairs**
7. **Listen attentively and wait for finish**
8. **Place yourself at eye level**
9. **Get attention of person with hearing impairment**
10. **Relax, use common expressions**

# The Arizona National Service Inclusion Work Team

**People with Disabilities applying for  
AmeriCorps membership have a great  
support network**

# The Arizona National Service Inclusion Work Team

- Arizona Department of Education,
- Vocational Rehabilitation services,
- Independent Living Centers,
- Self-advocacy organizations,
- Technology Access Project,
- Institute for Human Development/NAU,
- The ARC,
- AmeriCorps projects and state officials
- DES Behavioral Health Services

# **AmeriCorps members are trained for real jobs**

Members and volunteers get training in

- job-related skills,
- social skills, and
- life skills.

Members learn

- teamwork,
- communication,
- responsibility, and
- other essential skills that will help for the rest of their life.

# AmeriCorps members do real jobs

For instance, members:

- Support instructors in instruction and community outreach,
- Computer-center coordinators
- Help families complete applications for low cost health insurance,
- Coordinate healthy living seminars with diet and exercise,
- Forest restoration, trail maintenance,
- Outreach to neighborhood groups,
- Register people for library cards,
- Recruit and train community volunteers to tutor and read to both children and adults,
- Build houses,
- After school programs and individualized one-to-one mentoring,
- Connecting Baby Boomers & mentoring participants.

# SUPERVISOR COMMENT

I have worked in the disability community for over two decades. But until now I did not realize the opportunities available for people with disabilities who want to contribute to their communities. It has also been exciting to see how National Service can offer opportunities for personal and professional growth for people with disabilities as they pursue educational and employment prospects.



# **AmeriCorps alumni often choose careers in human services**

**89% of former AmeriCorps\*State and National Direct members accepted public service employment (including governmental and nonprofit work) within three years after completing their service.**

# **AmeriCorps alumni often choose careers in human services**

**86% of former AmeriCorps\*State and National Direct members indicated that their service experience and training helped to a large or moderate extent in their job, educational pursuits, or community service activities.**

# What is a Disability?

Disability is not so much the lack of a sense or the presence of a physical or mental impairment as it is the reception and construction of that difference . . . An impairment is a physical fact, but a disability is social construction. For example, lack of mobility is an impairment, but an environment without ramps turns that impairment into a disability. (Davis, 2000)

# THE RAMP

**AmeriCorps: A RAMP to  
Education and Employment**